Amendments to the Specification:

On page 4, please enter the following replacement paragraph for the fifth paragraph under the Summary of the Invention:

In accord with the objects of the present invention, there is provided a method for reducing the defect levels of photomasks by employment of a cleaning procedure without significant degradation of the photomask metal layers. To practice the invention, there is provided a photomask. ~~There is treated the~~ The photomask is treated with a solution of ammonium hydroxide and hydrogen peroxide in water at a particular concentration at a particular temperature for a specified time to remove particulate defects and residues without chemically attacking the patterned metal layers of the photomask. The cleaning procedure may be applied to a particular photomask for multiple cleaning cycles without significant degradation.

On page 5, please enter the following replacement paragraph for the sixth paragraph under the Summary of the Invention beginning on page 4:

The method of the present invention is intended to be employed with beneficial effect for any type of photomask which is formed from patterned metal layers on transparent[[.]] ~~S~~substrates. The method of the present invention is particularly well suited to the reduction of defects in phase shift photomasks, because these types of photomasks are particularly sensitive to very small amounts of removal of metal both from the opaque regions of the mask and at the edges of the pattern.

On page 6, please enter the following replacement paragraph for the first paragraph under the Description of the Preferred Embodiment (a period has been added at the end of the last sentence):

The present invention provides a method for reducing defect levels in a photomask by employing a cleaning procedure after fabrication or use which does not degrade the patterned metal layer of the photomask. The method may be exercised for multiple cycles on a particular photomask without degradation of the photomask.

On page 9, please enter the following replacement paragraphs for the first, second and third paragraphs under Experimental Results:

The results of experimental measurements performed after employing the method of the present invention and variations thereof are shown in Fig. [[3]] 4 and Fig. [[4]] 5, which are graphs displaying the experimental data taken. The measurements of particle density were performed employing Starlight KLA 1301_light scattering apparatus. The comparison shown in Fig. [[3]] 4 is between the method of the present invention and a cleaning process employing de-ionized water alone. It is clear from the data in Fig. [[3]] 4 that the method of the present invention removes particles from a photomask much more efficaciously than de-ionized water alone.

In Fig. [[4]] 5, there is shown the change in optical transmission or decrease in opaqueness of photomask samples treated to various permutations of the method of the present invention. Measurements of optical transmission were performed employing the MPM system supplied by Laser Tech, Inc. The data show that if the concentration of ammonium hydroxide and hydrogen peroxide exceeds a certain limit, the removal rate of metal increases. Even more, if the temperature exceeds a certain limit, the rate of removal of metal increases rapidly. The data shown in Fig. [[4]] 5 afford the basis for the improved cleaning without degradation obtained by employing the method of the present invention.

The average yield of the phase shift photomask cleaning process employing de-ionized water for an entire year was less than 20%. After incorporating the method of the present invention, the average yield of the cleaning process sector was increased to 80%. The increase in yield was in large part due to the great decrease in particulate matter retained on the photomask after cleaning, in agreement with the data presented in Fig. [[4]] 5.